



THE NEW WINE PRESS

Motivated by the Spirituality of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ

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PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY 2009

Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S.

Members and companions of the Kansas City Province met for their annual Assembly on April 20–22 at the Ramada Inn in St. Joseph, MO. Participants came from as far away as Vietnam and the states of Texas, Colorado, and California—in addition to the majority who live in the midwest in Iowa, Illinois, Ohio, Missouri and Kansas. We began of course with time for socializing and sharing a meal, reconnecting and renewing community bonds.

Monday was the birthday of the province, and so our opening prayer following dinner that evening focused on the anniversary of our provincial beginnings as well as grateful remembering of our deceased members and companions. Joe Nassal led the prayer, and his remarks (which can be found on page 10) set the tone for our time together—“Will the Circle Be Unbroken?”

The image of circle was held before us again on Tuesday morning when David Kelly and Bill Nordenbrock from the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation in Chicago led us in an introduction to Circle Training. During this session we were divided into circles of 10 people and invited into an experience of sharing and communication which encouraged listening at newer and deeper levels. It also provided us with a preview of and incentive toward the upcoming Circle Training workshop in June.

Tuesday afternoon was dedicated to reports from various ministries and offices within the province. Following on the morning experience of circles, Dave and Bill offered a full report on the activities and ministries of the PBMR. Readers of the PBMR column in this publication will be familiar with some of their work, which includes neighborhood outreach, ministry to victims of violence, hope and healing groups, working with youth in and out of detention, restorative justice efforts, and outreach activities to the wider Church and community.

Joe Miller and Sharon Crall from the Vocations Office reported on their activities and ministry during the past year in a variety of locations. In addition they challenged and invited everyone present to recall that we all called by one (God) but invited by many (all of us). Their column in this issue speaks more specifically to that challenge.

Joe Bathke, Province Director of Formation and Interprovincial Director of Initial Formation gave an overview of formation, with an emphasis on the collaboration with the Cincinnati Province. Beginning this summer, there will have been established a joint Initial Formation program, which means that now all levels of formation are combined and thus realized in a collaborative effort between the Kansas City and Cincinnati Provinces—Initial, Special and Advanced. The Initial Formation program will be located in Chicago,

See Assembly, continued on page 5...



LEADERSHIP NOTES

Joe Nassal, C.P.P.S.

Word on the street—and on the road to Emmaus—was that Jesus was alive. Those huddled in the upper room had heard the rumors about resurrection and that Jesus was making more appearances than Susan Boyle after her Holy Saturday night rendition of “I Dreamed a Dream” on *Britain’s Got Talent* that has become a YouTube sensation. Like the judges and audience when the 48-year-old single woman who lives with her cat began to sing, the first followers of Jesus could not believe their ears.

But it wasn’t long before they could not believe their eyes. Jesus stands in their midst and says, “Peace be with you.”

After the rumors that he was alive, the whispers about how he looked began. It is similar to what happens at provincial assemblies when we haven’t seen each other in awhile: He’s gained weight. He’s lost weight. She looks good. She looks pale. More than a few disciples in that upper room probably thought, “Jesus, you’ve lost a little weight since we saw you last.”

Making Connections: Rumors of Resurrection

“Well, I lost a lot of blood,” Jesus might have replied. “Torture tends to take a lot out of a person.” So he asks them for something to eat and as he munches on some over-cooked broiled fish, he “opens their minds to understand the Scriptures.”

The Risen Christ is about making connections. Jesus appears often to his followers after his resurrection and certain common themes are found in these sacred connections:

- There is first a shock or surprise, awe or fear. Jesus shows his scars which are the insignia of his suffering. They become his “coat of arms,” his ID. These tattoos of his torture help those who knew him to know him again.
- After establishing a safe place by showing his scars, there is some storytelling, sharing the Scriptures, breaking open God’s Word.
- Finally, there is normally some food involved—either a fish fry on a beach, some broken bread in a house in Emmaus, or some leftover baked fish in an upper room.

Of course it is not because Jesus had lost so much weight during his torture and internment in the tomb that he often eats with his disciples after his resurrection, but because he wants to model for his friends how they are to gather when he is no longer with them in person. He wants them to be hospitable to one another, to set a table through prayer, storytelling and a sign of peace. He seems to think having a meal together when they gather is a good idea.

This is a Eucharistic model, of course, but it is also the model of a Companion gathering, a District meeting, and the recent Provincial Assembly. It is the image of the circle, of establishing a safe place, of checking-in, of passing the talking/listening piece around the circle as we tell the truth about our wounds and wonders, our scars and sacred dreams. It is the model for our ministry and our community life to keep the Easter fire burning in our hearts.

Both of these Easter images—eating a meal to prove he is not a ghost and the marks of crucifixion visible on the body of Christ—reflect the radical nature of the resurrection. Jesus invites his followers to know him intimately—both through the

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Missionaries of the Precious Blood
Kansas City Province
www.kcprovince.org

The Society of the Precious Blood is a fraternal community of priests and brothers founded by St. Gaspar in 1815. Bonded through charity by a promise of fidelity, we are prayerfully motivated by the spirituality of the precious blood of Jesus Christ to serve the needs of the Church as discerned through the signs of the times and in the light of the Gospel.

The Kansas City Province—incorporated members, covenanted companions, and candidates—united in prayer, service and mutual support, characterized by the tradition of its American predecessors, are missionaries of these times with diverse gifts and ministries.

In a spirit of joy, we strive to serve all people—especially the poor—with care and compassion, hope and hospitality.

The New Wine Press seeks to remain faithful to the charism of our founder, St. Gaspar, and the spirituality of the Blood of Christ with its emphasis on reconciliation, renewal and refounding. We accept and encourage unsolicited manuscripts and letters to the editor.

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Word but also through his wounds. We recognize the Risen Lord not only in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup but also by his scars. We do not shy away from these scars on the tortured body of Christ but as precious blood people see them as signs of the coming of God's reign.

These scars on the resurrected body of Christ resonate especially with the news regarding the release of the memos that detailed acts of torture authorized by the Bush Administration and enacted by CIA operatives. When Jesus shows his disciples his scars of crucifixion, he is not only saying to them, "See, it really is me," he is also reminding them and us that he was a victim of torture. As Frank Rich wrote in *The New York Times*, "Five years after the Abu Ghraib revelations, we must acknowledge that our government methodically authorized torture and lied about it. But we also must contemplate the possibility that it did so not just out of a sincere, if criminally misguided, desire to 'protect' us but also to promote an unnecessary and catastrophic war" (April 26, 2009).

Gathering at the table of Eucharist to partake in the body and blood of Christ commits us to be not only servants of life but subversives when the forces of violence rule and rue the day. For when torture becomes the rule of law, then Eucharist is an act of subversion that places us squarely on the side of the victim. As we have learned in our study of reconciliation over the years, reconciliation always begins with the victim.

*Fr. Leonard Goettemoeller
and Fr. Joe Nassal.*



Jesus is the Paschal Victim of torture who shows us how not only to survive but to thrive with the scars visible on our bodies, minds, and souls. We do not deny these scars—whether they are personal or communal. Rather, in the circles we form, the safe places we establish, we touch these scars and share the stories because behind every scar there is a story.

On Holy Saturday night as Susan Boyle wowed the world with her voice, her song and her story, we heard from the book of Genesis that when God created the world, God announced it was "good"—or in the case of the human beings made in God's spitting image, "very good." But God did not deem the world "perfect." If the world or people were perfect, Easter would amount to a hill of jelly beans. Which is why if we reduce the resurrection to chocolate bunnies or butterflies or even beautiful flowers, we will miss the point that true peace can only come from the victim of terror and torture. True peace can only come through the scars on the resurrected body of Christ.

"For when torture becomes the rule of law, then Eucharist is an act of subversion that places us squarely on the side of the victim. As we have learned...over the years, reconciliation always begins with the victim."

This summer we have two important opportunities to continue the journey of establishing safe places for telling our stories and our truth and expanding the circles of our belonging. As leadership, we encourage all members and companions to consider taking part in the Circle Training Workshop at Savior Pastoral Center in Kansas City, KS June 8-11; and the workshop sponsored by the Precious Blood Ministry of Justice for persons who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered, "Assuring a Place at the Table," that will be held August 20-21 and August 21-22 at Marillac Center in Leavenworth, KS. There is more information about these events elsewhere in this issue, as well as in *The Weekly Wine Press* and on the province website, www.kcprovince.org. You may also call Precious Blood Center at 816.781.4344.

As we keep the rumors of resurrection we know to be true alive in our whispers and our witness, may we continue to recognize the Risen One alive among us in our willingness to tell our stories, trace our scars, and keep the Easter fire of forgiveness and reconciliation burning in our hearts.

Fr. Joe Nassal serves on the Province Leadership Team and is involved in retreat, mission, and writing ministries.

PRECIOUS BLOOD SCHOLARSHIPS

Al Ebach, C.P.P.S.

On Monday, April 20, 2009, the Kansas City Province celebrated forty-four years as a province. During these years a variety of innovative ideas and activities have been born, which have kept the spirit of St. Gaspar's mission alive. This year has afforded one more opportunity for the province to continue this spirit.

This past year the members and companions were invited to nominate candidates—who are entering a Catholic college, Catholic high school, or were presently in a Catholic high school—to receive a scholarship of one thousand dollars from the Kansas City Province. The young people were then asked to complete an application form, which included personal information and a list of service projects with which they have been involved in their parishes, schools or communities. Besides letters of recommendations from pastors or teachers, they were also asked to write a short essay about a Precious Blood member or companion, or to research and write about the history or spirituality of the Precious Blood.

After all the forms were returned, a committee comprised of Al Ebach, C.P.P.S., Jack McClure, C.P.P.S. and companions Tom Pankiewicz and Lynda Quistorff, met to determine the recipients of the scholarships.

The following nominees received the first annual scholarships from the Kansas City Scholarship Fund at the Jubilarian Banquet on April 22nd:

- Chase Gessner, nominated by Jack McClure, C.P.P.S., is presently attending Benton Community High School in Van Horne, IA. He will be attending Edgewood College in Madison, WI. Chase shared that because of the spirituality of the Eucharist he has experienced through Missionaries of the Precious Blood he has gained more of an appreciation of the Eucharist, and has gotten more involved at Mass.

- Clarissa Fierro Cheda, nominated by Chris Hoyt, is

presently attending St. Stephen's Academy in Kansas City, MO, and is planning to attend Bishop Ward High School in Kansas City, KS. Clarissa was inspired by St. Gaspar's dedication to the Precious Blood and his willingness to serve the poor.

- Fatima Leon, nominated by Bill Delaney, C.P.P.S., is presently attending Bishop Conoty-Loretto High School in Los Angeles, CA, and will continue attending this high school for the 2009–2010 school year. Fatima expressed an appreciation for the dedicated service of the Precious Blood Missionaries serving the people of St. Agnes Parish in Los Angeles.

- Deborah Lewis, nominated by the pastoral team at Sedalia Catholic Community, is graduating from Sacred Heart High School, Sedalia, MO, and planning to attend Rockhurst University in Kansas City, MO. She shared that she has admired the priests she has gotten to know at Sacred Heart Parish who have been so committed to ministry at the parishes in the Sedalia community.

*Scholarship Recipients, from left:
Veronica Modlin, Clarissa Fierro Cheda,
Lucero Rey, and Jennifer Rehmer.*



“May the voice of Gaspar be heard through the families of these young people, and may our province continue to be blessed through their service to the Church and with the Precious Blood community.”

- Veronica Modlin, nominated by Charles Crotty, Sr., is graduating from Bishop LeBlond High School, St. Joseph, MO, and is planning to attend Benedictine College in Atchison, KS. Veronica shared her thoughts about Precious Blood spirituality, referencing the three images she experiences in the Eucharist: the cup, the cross and the covenant.

• Jennifer Rehmer, nominated by the pastoral team at Sedalia Catholic Community, Sedalia, MO, will be graduating from Sacred Heart High School, and is planning to attend St. Louis University, St. Louis, MO. Jennifer shared that she has appreciated how the Missionaries of the Precious Blood have fostered the Catholic faith in the parishes they serve in Sedalia.

• Lucero Rey, nominated by Matt Link, C.P.P.S., attends Cristo Rey High School, Kansas City, MO, where she will continue for the 2009–2010 school year. As a freshman in high school, Lucero has considered religious life, encouraged by the Precious Blood members who have been part of her life in her school and her parish.

Congratulations to these young people. What a privilege it was for the members and companions to have four of these young people and their parents join them at the Jubilarian Mass and Banquet to receive their scholarship certificates. Those who were not able to attend will have their certificates presented by those who nominated them.

May the voice of Gaspar be heard through the families of these young people, and may our province continue to be blessed through their service to the Church and with the Precious Blood community.

Fr. Al Ebach serves on the Province Leadership Team and is pastor of Sacred Heart-Guadalupe Parish in Kansas City, MO.



Assembly, continued from page 1...

with residence in Hyde Park and education at Xavier University. The two provinces are also in conversation about moving towards a joint Vocations Ministry.



Fr. Jim Urbanic preaching at the Tuesday Covenant Mass.

responsibility and generosity with our finances, our time, and our talents.

Tuesday evening we welcomed additional companions who were able to join the group for dinner and the Eucharist celebrating Companion Covenants. Jim Urbanic presided and accepted the covenants in the name of the province. Those making covenants were from companion groups in Albia and Centerville, Iowa; and St. Joseph, Sedalia, Warrensburg, Liberty and Kansas City in Missouri.



Chris Hoyt

Wednesday morning we welcomed Dr. Monica Applewhite to our gathering. She gave a presentation on Conflict Resolution and Restorative Justice, a workshop designed to fulfill our ongoing educational requirements for continued accreditation through Praesidium. Dr. Applewhite came to us with an extensive background in working with religious organizations. Among other things, she was instrumental in developing an education and accreditation program for religious orders called “Instruments of Hope and Healing” which was designed to hold members of these orders to the highest standards of child protection and response.



Dr. Monica Applewhite

On Wednesday afternoon we heard the remainder of the reports from province ministries, beginning with Chris Hoyt from the Precious



Companion Ed Quistorff

Continued on page 6...

Continued from page 5...

Blood Volunteer Program Office. Much of his time since beginning last December has been devoted to developing the program and much progress has been made. By this summer the goal is to secure living communities, work sites and funding for the first contingent of volunteers. Recruiting will begin in Fall 2009. Brochures are now being developed as is the Volunteer page on the province website. An Advisory Board is being assembled to assist the director and staff and everything is in order to begin with the first volunteers in Summer 2010.



*Sr. Joni Belford and
Companion Jeanie Grabl*



*Fr. Lac Pham and Companions
Rollie and Lucy Reznick*

Precious Blood community, and the challenges ahead for inviting new members into formation as companions. There are currently 481 Covenanted Companions in 31 groups in the Kansas City and Cincinnati Provinces.

Sr. Joni Belford gave a report on the Precious Blood Leadership Conference. She highlighted ongoing plans for the Precious Blood Convocation on July 26–29, 2010 to be held at St. Louis University in St. Louis. She also announced that the new Precious Blood Prayer Book, several years in the making, is now being printed and will be available within the next two months. She also stated that the online Advent and Lenten reflections which have been available for six years now will continue. The PBLC website is located at www.precious-blood.ca.

Marie Trout and Br. Nick Renner followed with a report on Companions and the many activities of the past year, a retrospective slide show covering the 20 years since companions became part of the



Fr. Dennis Schaab

David Matz gave a report on the work of the Precious Blood Ministry of Justice for Persons who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered, focusing in particular on the workshop which will be presented this summer in both Dayton, OH and Leavenworth, KS. More



*Fr. Tom Welk preaching
at the Jubilee Mass*

information about this workshop is available elsewhere in this issue as well as on their website at www.allbloodisprecious.com. It is open to persons who are LGBT and their families as well as members and covenanted companions.

The final report was given by Fr. Lac Pham, director of the Vietnam Mission. He, along with Fr. Dien Truong and candidate Dominic Bui, make up the current membership. There are a number of non-incorporated candidates in formation as well. Lac reported that their have been improvements in their residence locations and also some further progress with their relationship with the government. It continues to be a ministry and a life filled with challenges. Lac also spoke of some frustration with the education and formation in the theological schools there, indicating that he may be exploring the possibility of candidates doing some of their education in the United States.



*Fr. Mike Volkmer and
Companion Jan Summers*

The “business” part of the Assembly having concluding, our gathering moved to St. Francis Xavier Parish (staffed by our province) in St. Joseph, where we celebrated Mass honoring our Jubilarians followed by a banquet. Following the meal, the first Precious Blood scholarships were awarded, after which the four jubilarians who were present spoke to us.

The jubilarians who were present were John Wolf, Thomas Welk and Richard Colbert (40 years ordained); and Leonard Goettemoeller (60 year ordained). Not able to join us were Bernard Diekhoff (70 years incorporated) and Lawrence Cyr (65 years ordained). Fr. Ralph Bushell, was honored posthumously for his 60 years ordained; he died just one month short of his anniversary.

The banquet was an appropriately festive ending to our time together, as we found ourselves celebrating once again in circles and around tables. The circle is unbroken.

ASSEMBLY 2009



St. Joseph Companions



Fr. John Wolf



Liberty Companions



Fr. Ron Will and Companion Nancy Clisbee



Frs. Bill Walter and Keith Branson



Fr. Jim Betzen with Central Missouri Companions



Fr. Mark Miller



Frs. Al Ebach and Tom Welk



Jubilarians, from l: Fr. Richard Colbert, Fr. Leonard Goettmoeller, Fr. Tom Welk, and Fr. John Wolf

+FR. RALPH BUSHELL, C.P.P.S.

Fr. Ralph C. Bushell, C.P.P.S., a member of the Kansas City Province, died Monday, March 2, 2009. Born on September 6, 1921 to John A. Bushell and Perle (Lambert) Bushell in Elkhart, IL, he entered Brunnerdale Seminary in September of 1938 and was professed on December 3, 1947. He was ordained to the priesthood on March 25, 1949.

Fr. Ralph ministered in a variety of places in his first 20 years of priesthood. He began full time ministry in 1949 in Fond du Lac, WI as a chaplain at St. Mary's Springs Academy. In 1955 he was called to be the prefect of discipline at Brunnerdale Seminary. In 1957 he went to St. Mark's Parish in Cincinnati, OH as an assistant pastor, where he stayed one year before becoming chaplain at St. Francis Hospital in La Crosse, WI.

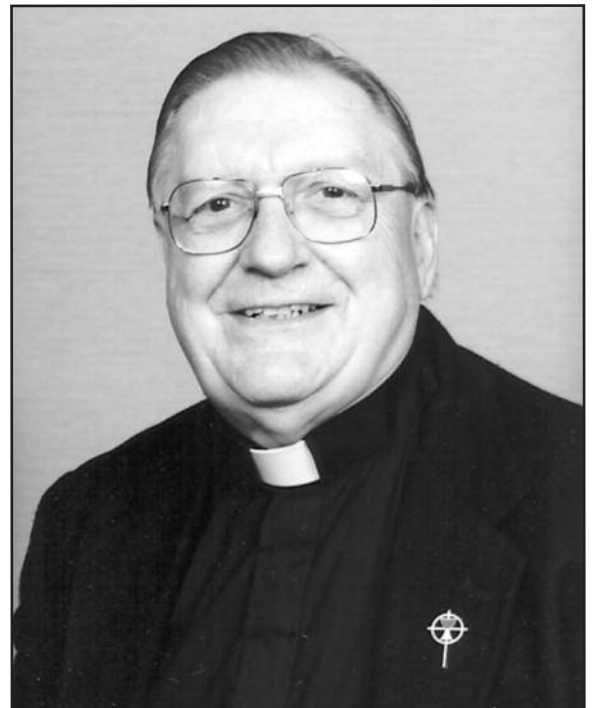
In 1960 Fr. Ralph moved to St. Joseph's College in Rensselaer, IN as guidance director, and two years later became assistant pastor at St. Augustine's Parish in Rensselaer. In 1963 he was asked to go to Little Company of Mary Hospital in Evergreen Park, IL as chaplain. In 1964 he became an instructor at Sacred Heart College in Wichita, KS. In 1967 Fr. Ralph became a chaplain at Mount Marty College in Yankton, SD. His last parish assignment was St. Francis Xavier in St. Joseph, MO in 1970.

In 1971 Fr. Ralph was assigned to Precious Blood Seminary in Liberty as an instructor and as executive secretary of the Kansas City Province. He lived at the seminary until it closed in 1983. In 1995 Fr. Ralph resigned as provincial secretary, but continued to live at Precious Blood Center until he moved to Our Lady of Mercy Country Home in Liberty in 2005.

Fr. Ralph spent a number of years as a chaplain in convents and on college campuses, where he undoubtedly impacted many people. He is especially remembered, however, by students and staff at Precious Blood Seminary, where he taught Latin and assisted many of them in the mimeograph room. He became a master of the ink copiers and the mimeograph machine. One could always hear his typewriter clicking away in his office writing official letters or getting the next province newsletter ready for printing.

Fr. Ralph also had a dry sense of humor and a sensitive style of counseling that invited many students into his office. Students enjoyed his laugh because it began with his entire body quietly bouncing up and down in his chair. Fr. Ralph was very knowledgeable about many aspects of life and had a tremendous love for the Precious Blood community. He knew the history of the community very well, but his true love was helping to develop the future of the community. He represented the community in a variety of ways and served on a number of committees both nationally and internationally.

Of all his assignments through the years there probably was none that Fr. Ralph enjoyed more than celebrating Eucharist at Our Lady of Mercy Country Home in Liberty. For 32 years he traveled there for the 10:15 A.M. Mass. He was committed and dependable for all those years. He saw many residents come and go, and was very much invited to be part of the Mercedarian community. He blessed the sisters and the residents with his presence. A special thanks to the sisters and the residents for inviting Fr. Ralph to be part of their lives. As they remember him at the altar, we as province members will also remember Fr. Ralph behind the desk at our assemblies, keeping track of the members and making sure they observed Roberts' Rules of Order. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Friday, March 6, 2009 at St. James Church in Liberty, and burial followed at Resurrection Cemetery. +R.I.P.



Fr. Ralph Bushell 1921–2009

IN MEMORIAM

A PRAYER FOR FATHER BUSHELL

My thoughts of you are mostly secular,
I must confess. My first classical record,
The Brandenburg Concertos of J.S. Bach,
A graduation gift from you. Picture me
Long-hair, thumb out, and humming Number 3
Across high deserts—high myself, probably—
Chasing some girl with my bad poetry.
And yet, without those tripping melodies,
Would I have found Mass in B Minor,
St. Matthew Passion, Magnificat?

In fearless youth, Pope said, we tempt
The height of art. Or maybe not. While you
Tried dutifully to drag us through a Punic
War or two, the thing I wanted was
To weasel out of you the word for “turd”
In Latin and in Greek. I posted them
On a cigar box I got from Father Zeke.

It would take me many years to feel
Like Caliban: You taught me language, Ralph,
And my profit on’t was, I knew how to curse.

But maybe the Sacred can only be approached
By way of the Profane. You gave me Housman.
His rose-lipped maidens and light-foot lads live with
Me still. You gave me Waugh and Isherwood,
And other feasts, but more importantly,
You put up with me. Whatever ember
I had back then burned weak and flickering
Behind a paper wall of bravado. You
Befriended me at a time when I was mostly
Full of *stercus*, (or would one say *stercoris*?).

I remember asking your age, and trying,
Without success, to imagine forty-five.
Today I can’t even recollect if I
Was gray at forty-five.

Dear Father Ralph,

What wisps of consciousness or saintliness
Remain in that far country from whose bourn
No traveler returns, forgive the friend
Who neglected you in your old age. Recall
Instead the boy for whom you were the first
Model of Renaissance Man, and pray for me.

Jon Volkmer 3.4.09

Jon Volkmer, a 1974 graduate of Precious Blood Seminary, Liberty, MO, is Professor of English and Director of Creative Writing at Ursinus College in Collegeville, PA.

REMEMBERING RALPH BUSHELL

Larry Cyr, C.P.P.S.

Fr. Ralph Bushell was my Provincial Secretary for the eight years that I was Provincial Director, 1971–1979. Before that he served with me in Wichita, Kansas, teaching at Sacred Heart College.

I remember him as a very quiet, soft-spoken man, very conscientious and hard-working as Provincial Secretary. He was somewhat of a loner, but a very loyal follower of St. Gaspar. He was loyal to the Society and performed well whatever duties he was assigned.

As Provincial Secretary he accompanied me as I traveled to community meetings and gatherings, here in the States and abroad. I especially enjoyed his company on our trips to Europe, as he was well versed in so much of that history. After each of our meetins in Europe concluded we would visit some historical places. In France, I recall going to the Louvre and Notre Dame Cathedral, walks along the Seine, and climbing the Eiffel Tower. There were visits to Lisieux, St. Michel by the Seas, and Lourdes.

Fr. Bushell loved good music and in Salzburg we attended concerts every night in churches or in concert halls. I recall one incident in Denmark at the estate of the king. We could not enter the grounds of course, but the man at the gate was friendly and began speaking to us in Danish, which neither of us understood. I decided to go for a short walk around the outside of the estate—and when I returned, Fr. Bushell was still there with the man, nodding politely from time to time, and understanding not a thing. We traveled to many places together and I have good memories of those times. Fr. Ralph was always a good companion.

As Provincial Secretary, and even afterwards, Fr. Bushell had the task of writing the obituaries of our priests and brothers. There always seemed to be a personal touch which he found to help us understand the particular character and gift of each individual.

I am happy to have had such a long and personal relationship with him.



Fr. Larry Cyr currently serves the community in the ministry of retirement at St. Charles Center. He served as Provincial Director from 1971–1979, and as pastor in Coleman, TX for over 25 years. Larry is pictured here on the left along with Fr. Ben Diekhoff, also in retirement ministry. Both of them are jubilarians this year, with Fr. Ben celebrating 70 years of incorporation and Fr. Larry 60 years of ordination.

WILL THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN?

Joe Nassal, C.P.P.S.

[Excerpted from the the opening prayer service of the Assembly.]

Happy Birthday! Forty-four years ago today, the Kansas City Province was born. We are forty-four years old but may I say we don't look a day over forty. Well, maybe some of us do.

As we celebrate the birth of our province tonight, we also remember those who have died, the members and companions, missionaries all of the blood of Christ, who helped shape our identity as a province and even now sustain us with their prayer as they join the ever-increasing circle of saints that form us in a holy communion in the body and blood of Christ.

Since our last Assembly, we lost three Ralphs—Ralph Bushell, Ralph Wheeler, and Ralph Bardgett—along with Joan Sage, John Rauth, and Frieda Gallagher, and most recently, Greg Martin, the husband of companion Judy Kotecki. All brought their special gifts to the circle of our community, but tonight as we begin this Assembly I'm

especially aware of Fr. Ralph Bushell who was a fixture at the front table of our Assemblies for so many years. He served as secretary for the province and kept us connected through the province newsletter, the predecessor of the New Wine Press. Ralph kept our Assemblies orderly through roll calls and *Robert's Rules of Order*, especially when our pioneer spirit kindled creative expressions of kingdom come.

“Though the years roll by and the busyness of all of our lives make it seem like we're running around in circles at times, we stop this week to keep company with one another and consider how this circle of community keeps growing ever larger.”



Frs. Timothy Armbruster and Ben Diekhoff

those of us with limited interest in learning Latin—the language once deemed dead now experiencing a resurrection in certain

Visiting Ralph in the hospital a couple weeks before he died, we reflected on his approaching 60th anniversary of ordination. He spoke warmly of the places where he had been, including St. Francis Xavier in St. Joseph, Sacred Heart College (now Newman University) in Wichita, and of course his long tenure at Precious Blood Seminary where he tried to teach

church circles. Ralph was also, of course, a faithful servant and sacramental minister for Our Lady of Mercy home in Liberty for so many years.

At one point in our conversation, we mused whether his classmate, Leonard Goettemoeller, would be able to make the Assembly to celebrate their 60th anniversary. We are delighted and grateful to Fr. Leonard for making the trip. He and Vince Hoying represent our circle of members at St. Charles



Fr. Leonard Goettemoeller regales the crowd at the Jubilarian Banquet

where our missionaries of prayer and presence reflect the strong shoulders on which we stand on this 44th anniversary of the birth of our province. It is with Great Expectations that we celebrate Leonard's 60th anniversary on Wednesday, along with our 40th anniversary group of John Wolf, Tom Welk, and Richard Colbert. They were newly ordained priests the fall I entered Precious



Companions Betty Rauth and her daughter Patty Hayes

Blood Seminary. No, we're not getting old! We've only just begun—which I think was a big hit by the Carpenters about that time. We also honor this week Ben Diekhoff as he celebrates seventy years of Incorporation and Larry Cyr in his 65th year of priesthood.

Coming together tonight on the birthday of our province while honoring the memory of those who have died reminds us of the rhythm and movement of the circle of life. The traditional folk song that approaches a hymn asks, “Will the Circle Be Unbroken?”, and the answer is found in an inclusive and expanding vision of community that transcends time and

space and stretches to that place where all are welcome and all find a home. Like a rubber band that expands and never breaks or an elastic bond that wraps itself around all peoples, all creatures, and all of creation to embrace a vision of inclusivity and possibility, this circle of love grows ever larger.

The late poet and storyteller, Harry Chapin, reflects this vision:

All my life's a circle,
sunrise and sundown,
Moon rolls through the nighttime
'til the daybreak comes around.
All my life's a circle,
but I can't tell you why;
Season's spinning round again,
the years keep rolling by.

Though the years roll by and the busyness of all of our lives make it seem like we're running around in circles at times, we stop this week to keep company with one another and consider how this circle of community keeps growing ever larger.

That is certainly the call of our founder Gaspar, who in his Circular Letters inspired this vision of a circle that never shrinks nor shirks its responsibility to preach and live the spirituality of the Blood of Christ.



Frs. Joe Uecker and Bill Miller

As we heard in our reading tonight, our spirituality shouts of expanding the circles of our lives so that all who are far off are brought near through the blood of Christ. Our spirituality names this circle as a safe place around the cross where the barrier of hostility dissolves under the outstretched arms of the crucified Christ. Our spirituality claims the truth that we are strangers to the covenant of love no longer, but friends, who summon the courage to go "outside the gates," expanding the social or ecclesial limits of belonging to stand with those who find no welcome, no place at the table. Baptized in the blood of Christ, we are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,"



Companions Paul Muller and Judy Kotecki

who find healing through the wounds on the body of Christ and who believe a small group of committed souls can bring hope to a world scarred by violence through their witness to the crucified and risen Christ.

During this week, this image of the circle will take

center stage as Dave Kelly and Bill Nordenbrock from our Reconciliation Center in Chicago will lead us in a process of circle training. As we establish safe space to tell the stories and listen to each other's hearts, we seek to hold the circle of



truth sacred in a world where the *Jubilee Mass* cycle of violence and fear spins out of control.

We will also take time this year to listen to those who serve and lead us in various reflections of our charism and spirituality—from vocation ministry and volunteers to Vietnam; from finances to formation; from reconciliation ministry to the ministry of justice with our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered brothers and sisters. We will honor our twenty-year relationship as incorporated members and companions in the blood of Christ as we



Companion Urban Miller and Fr. Vince Hoying

celebrate and renew our covenants. We welcome Sister Joni Belford who represents the ever-widening circle of our

Precious Blood family through the Leadership Conference who will update us on the preparations for the Precious Blood Congress in St. Louis in 2010. And we will also sense our sacred connection with our larger faith community through the presentation by Dr. Monica Applewhite on conflict resolution as we continue to address the wounds caused by the clergy sexual abuse scandal. As St. Gaspar reminded us tonight, what we need most of all when we read the wounds of the crucified and

See Circle, continued on page 13...

WHY WE BUILT A SCHOOL

Timothy Coday, C.P.P.S.

When I came to Tanzania 25 years ago, primary education was mandatory for all school-age children. The schools, though tuition-free, were not well attended in the central part of the country where I was stationed.

Government officials would visit the schools to check their enrollment rosters. They would levy fines against the parents of children who were listed on the roster but not attending the school. To counter this, the parents would bribe the headmasters to have their children's names stricken from the roster. That way the children could be kept at home to tend the cattle and work in the fields.

People here are cattle herders; wealth and prestige are determined by the size of their herds. Education was not highly valued then.

Time passed. Improvements in infrastructure allowed better and more frequent interaction between those in rural and urban areas. This with more and better access to the printed word sparked an interest in young people. They wanted to learn to read and write. They wanted an education.

I was in the office of the mission one day, and a young woman, 15 years old, came in crying. After she calmed down, she told me that she wanted to go to school but her father would not let her. I went with her to see her father. He said he did not want his daughter to go to school because she would see and learn about things outside the village. He said, "She'll come home from school and ask me, 'Why don't we have a cement floor and metal sheets for a roof?' She would demand these things. I would have to sell off cattle. My herd would decrease, and then where would I be?" I don't know if that girl ever made it to school.

Another young woman, 16 years old, came to me. She was crying and obviously scared. She wanted to go to school, but her

"Now, the children who fought with their parents are parents themselves. They have experienced the fruits of education—things like the ability to read a contract, skills to find a salaried job, a chance for higher education—and they want those things for their children."

father had arranged a marriage for her. The bride price the groom's family would pay would give the father more cattle. The young woman wanted no part of marriage, because it would end her education. I got this settled, but it happened again. By the time I heard of the new marriage, the father had already accepted the cattle from the groom's family, which meant his daughter was already part of the other family. Only by threatening the father with jail time could I get him to give the cows back and get his daughter back. After this happened a third time, I arranged for the young woman to go to boarding school. Today she is a Montessori kindergarten teacher. She is a proud wife and mother of one.

This period caused hurtful divisions in families. Rifts developed between parents and children. One generation wanted to keep things the way they "had always been," and the other generation longed for change.

Now, the children who fought with their parents are parents themselves. They have experienced the fruits of education—things like the ability to read a contract, skills to find a salaried job, a chance for higher education—and they want those things for their children.

Tanzania, however, was not ready for this change. There were not enough schools. Some schools were so overcrowded that they started teaching half days, with one group of students studying in the morning and a second group studying in the afternoon. Still some schools had close to 200 students per classroom.

The national government started a program in 2000 to build a secondary school in each township. In 2004 a nationwide program was started to increase the number of primary schools. Parents were enlisted to help in the construction. They carried water to the construction site, collected sand and rocks and contributed financially.

This eased the situation but did not resolve it. Having more schools did not solve another major problem: poverty. Schools are tuition-free, but students must come to school in uniform and with supplies. These are simple things, but beyond the means of many families.

Poverty does not decrease the desire for a good education for ones children. This is why we—a mission project founded to drill water wells—built a school.

We began with a two-year kindergarten program to prepare students for primary school. From the very beginning all classes are taught in English. Swahili is the national language, but English is the language of instruction. We provide uniforms and have a hot-meal program. For some of our students, the meal they get at school is the only meal they get in a day. We limit the number of students per classroom to 30.

The first year, many parents thought the school was free and were taken aback that we charged moderate tuition. Knowing there was no way they could pay, these families sold the names of their children, and the buyer then got the child's reserved spot in our school. When we learned this, we got the word out that no child would be refused because of money. We developed a work program so the parents of the students who cannot pay can work off the tuition.

Last year, we announced that registration for a new class would begin Nov. 28. The night before, at 10:30, our guards came and said that a woman and her child were at the gate of the school. She was sleeping outside the gate with her child to be the first in line to register. Registration was set for 7 A.M. By 5 A.M. we had more than 200 people at the gate. At registration time there were more than 500 people. We had places for 90 students. We had to turn away 410.

Twenty-five years ago, parents would dodge the law and bribe officials to keep their children at home. Now they will sleep outdoors with the child at the gate of the school to make sure they have a place.

We built our school for people who want a good education for their children but cannot afford it. The gap between the haves and the have-nots is growing. We want to aid in lessening this gap.

Fr. Timothy Coday, C.P.P.S. is a Missionary of the Precious Blood from the Atlantic Province. This article appeared in the April 3, 2009 edition of National Catholic Reporter. It is reprinted here with permission.

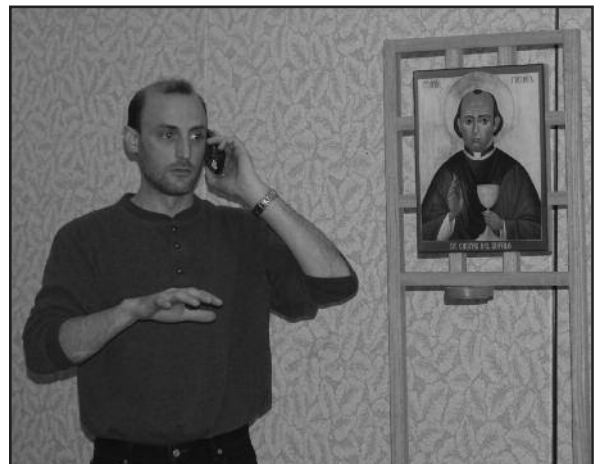
Circle, continued from page 11...

risen Christ is the “mystical wine of repentance which takes away our lethargy and invigorates our souls anew.”

Most of all during these days we seek to strengthen the spirit of community as Gaspar challenged us to do through his Circular Letters. “Why have you come here?” he asked his missionaries when they gathered. “Yes, let each one of us ponder these words and thus better inform ourselves for the purpose of our being in the Society.” We have come here tonight to celebrate our birth and to remember those who have gone before us in faith, hope and love. We know the circle is unbroken for as Harry Chapin wrote,

It seems like I've been here before
I can't remember when;
But I have this funny feeling,
That we'll all be together again.
No straight lines make up my life,
And all my roads have bends,
There's no clear-cut beginnings,
And so far no dead ends.
As I find you here again,
A thought runs through my mind,
Our love is like a circle,
Let's go 'round one more time.

*Fr. Timothy Armbruster
on the phone with St. Gaspar?*



FAN THE FLAMES!

Sharon Crall

“We are Iowans, Californians, and Ohioans, inhabitants of St. Joseph, Liberty and Warsaw; Kearney, Sedalia and Warrensburg; Baileyville and Wichita; Vietnam, Colorado and the districts of east central Iowa near Van Horne, as well as travelers from Chicago, both North Dakota and South Dakota; Texans, Kansas Citians, and Wisconsinites; yet we all hear and praise the mighty acts of God.”

Yes, it's that reading from the *Acts of the Apostles* (“We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia....”) that is the nightmare of newly commissioned lectors, but we return to hear its words every Pentecost. As this feast approaches on May 31st, we again explore the wondrous beginnings of our Church. With the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles and those in the Upper Room, these people were stirred to action and power to go and make disciples. It is that same Spirit which empowers us from our many locales to spread our faith and work together to build our Church in the present and the future. The Pentecost experience did not end in the Upper Room.

We have good news to share. Our commitment and fidelity to our faith, lived out through the lens of Precious Blood spirituality, should enflame us. In turn, it is only when we are on fire with our own vocations that we will be able to pass the flame on to others. Blessed with many gifts, talents and abilities, we are commissioned to be witnesses of a Church alive with promise and possibility. Just as it took many people from many locales with different gifts to nurture the early Church, similarly it takes many to give witness to create a “culture of vocations” which is so needed in our Church today.

This special year of St. Paul, which will soon come to a close, has reminded us of this missionary zeal to which we should be committed. Paul was a great leader of the missionary vision of the early Church and nurtured its tender beginnings. Our Church is in need of individuals who will help create and nurture a “culture of vocations.”

We need not look far to find the people who have the ability to ignite such a culture. Each one of us has a certain gift—“a certain spark”—which can contribute to the building up of vocations to the religious life. First of all, we should have the witness of our life lived out in truth and hope in faith. It is this living example which many times attracts persons to our community. Second, we have the ability to identify those who have special gifts that could be shared in ministry. Third, we remember that it is God who calls individuals to ministry, but we are many times the instruments who are asked to encourage

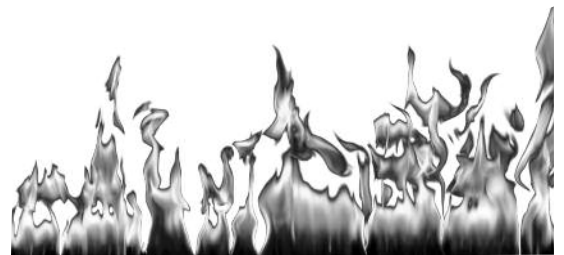
and invite these people.

So in the spirit of Pentecost we challenged all those at the recent Assembly, and we challenge those reading this article to certain tasks in this coming year. Yes, all you Iowans, Californians, and inhabitants of St. Joseph:

- Identify two spiritually healthy people who could be prospects for a vocation to religious life, and give their names and information to the Vocation Office.
- Do something in your ministry about vocations at least once a month.
- Pray “My Daily Vocation Prayer.”
- Open up the gift of our Community and share it with all you meet.

May the Holy Spirit be our strength and guide on our 2009 vocation journey.

*Sharon Crall, a Precious Blood companion,
is associate director of Vocation Ministry.*



MY DAILY VOCATION PRAYER

God, our Creator, I ask that this day may give me the opportunity through my ministry and actions to encourage a vocation to the priesthood, brotherhood, and or sisterhood.

I also ask that through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, I may support and encourage those already in ministry to grow in their service of You and the Church.

Help me to live a Christ-like life through the help of St. Gaspar so that I may give a good example. May my prayer and concern for vocations result in an increase of religious vocations for Christ, the Church, and the Missionaries of the Precious Blood.

Amen.

AMBASSADORS OF CHRIST

Bill Nordenbrock, C.P.P.S.

While the restorative justice program in Chicago is at the heart of the mission of the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation, equally important are our efforts to promote reconciliation within the Church. That aspect of our work has three main components: preaching, teaching and accompaniment.

Our inspiration and vocation is found in II Corinthians 5:19–20: “I mean that God, in Christ, was reconciling the world to himself, not counting humans’ transgressions against them, and that he has entrusted the message of reconciliation to us. This makes us ambassadors for Christ.”

It is Joe Nassal who takes our PBMR ministry to the Church as a preacher. Inspired by our spirituality, he preaches a message of reconciliation to parishes and various faith communities. This past Lent he utilized a Profession of Faith [see insert] that recognizes and reminds his listeners of the connection between our baptismal commitment and the call to be an ambassador of Christ and his message of reconciliation.

It has also been a goal of PBMR to be a resource to the members of the family of Precious Blood congregations. It is this concern that guides our efforts in sharing with others the practical methods that we have developed in our reconciliation ministry. Last fall, Dave Kelly and I led a training program in the Circle method at the Spiritual Center of Maria Stein. That program will be repeated in the Kansas City Province this June. I also have developed a one day program to help participants come to a better understanding of the ministry of reconciliation. That program was offered to a group of Companions in Florida this past January and I have recently presented it for the third time to the Intercongregational Novitiate Program in the St. Louis area.

I have worked with various Church groups who are experiencing conflict and who wish to effect reconciliation. Here our ministry has been assistance to parishes and religious congregations. During the recent official visitation in India with the Moderator General, I was able to draw upon the experience in Chicago to assist our confreres there with a new approach to visioning and strengthening their common life.

It is a spirituality of the Precious Blood that continues to guide us—in preaching and teaching and in the direct assistance that we provide as we accompany those that are experiencing conflict and desiring reconciliation. We have been washed in the waters of baptism and in the blood that reconciles. It is that dual baptism which guides and inspires us as we accept the call to be Christ’s ambassadors of reconciliation.

Fr. Bill Nordenbrock is on the staff of the PBMR and serves the international community as a member of the Curia in Rome.

RENEWAL OF BAPTISMAL COMMITMENT TO BE AN AMBASSADOR OF RECONCILIATION

I believe in one God, Father and Mother of all,
Creator of heaven and earth, of all that we see
and all that remains hidden in the Divine
Heart

I believe in a Loving and Compassionate God
Who formed me in my mother’s womb
and created me in the Divine Image.
I believe I am a Child of God.

I believe in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh,
the manifestation of divine compassion
who recovered the image of God in all peoples,
who redeems us from all sin and deceit,
who reconciles all who are far off,
drawing all peoples near
through the blood of his cross.

I believe in the Creative, Holy Spirit of God,
who carries on the work
of Creator and Redeemer
as the Sanctifier and Sustainer of all life.
I believe it is God’s Spirit
who speaks through prophets and sages
of ages past,
and who continues to speak today a message
of peace and justice, truth and love.

Trusting in God’s presence and promise,
I believe God calls me
to be an ambassador for Christ
and has entrusted me
with a message of reconciliation
to be a minister of healing and hope
in my family, in my faith community,
in my work, and in all of my relationships.

Inspired by God’s grace,
I commit myself to restoring relationships
in all places and with all peoples
in the name of God, Mother and Father,
Jesus, Brother and Friend,
and the Holy Spirit,
one God,
forever and ever.
Amen.



THE NEW CREATION

REFLECTIONS FROM THE PRECIOUS BLOOD MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

“I’m not ready for summer,” he said. That statement kind of surprised me, because he’s a 16 year-old who loves basketball and being outside. After questioning him as to why, he said, “Man, there’s too much fighting.” That I understood. I, too, love the summer, but, like this young man, I fear the increase in violence that comes along with the warmer weather.

A young man came to the Precious Blood Center the other day carrying a baseball bat. It wasn’t for baseball. He had been jumped a few days before and carried the bat to give him some protection. I tried to explain that the bat probably would cause more problems than it would solve, but that little lesson fell on deaf ears.

The television and newspapers carry the story of the increase in shootings and death of public school children. There have been over five hundred kids shot, with 29 deaths this school year alone. I recently gave a talk for some grammar school youth. It was a neighboring Catholic school and so I couldn’t really say no—or felt I couldn’t. A young man who is in the gang and had been shot came along with me. In the midst of our sharing, I asked how many of them knew someone who had been shot. Almost all their hands went up. “How many of you know someone in jail or prison?” Again, all their hands went up. I wasn’t surprised, but struggled with how early our children’s innocence is taken from them.

Confronting a Culture of Violence is the title of a pastoral letter written by the US Catholic Bishops over 15 years ago. It spoke of how our “families are torn apart by violence, of how our communities are destroyed by violence.” The Catholic Bishops went on to say that our “faith is tested by violence and that we have an obligation to respond.” They said that “the violence—in our homes, our schools and streets, our nation and world—is destroying the lives, dignity, and hopes of millions of our sisters and brothers. Fear of violence is paralyzing and polarizing our communities.”

While no one would argue that violence—in all its forms—is destroying the fabric of our society, whether or not we have fulfilled our obligation to respond is a little less certain. Too often, there is an attitude that someone else carries that obligation.

No matter what “side” of the issue you are on and no matter what issue is on the top of your “to do” list, the spirituality of the Precious Blood calls us to respond to the violence and the

conflicts by creating safe places where people can come together in honest and open dialogue.

I strive with all my heart to be non-violent, and yet any attempt to convince the young man that carrying a baseball bat was wrong without hearing him out would have been futile at best. Before I can ask him to put the baseball bat down, I need to hear his story and create a place where he can express his fear, anger and frustration at the violence that surrounds him. Only then will there be a chance that he might discover that violence only breeds more violence.

It may sound simplistic, it may even sound naïve, but much of our work is creating safe places where people can speak openly and honestly from their heart. Jesus went to synagogue on the Sabbath; we hear those stories clearly in scripture. But more than synagogue, Jesus went to places of conflict and pain and made room for people to be heard. Jesus allowed those who were excluded and isolated to find their voice and be heard.

Joe Nassal once remarked how he, when confronted by someone who strongly disagreed with him, became more interested in the passion expressed by the man than the issue itself. Joe went on to say how he would have liked to know why the man held his view so strongly. What was his story that he was so unwavering in his position?

What I have found more times than not is that once I had the chance to hear someone out with whom I disagreed from a distance—and they me—we held more in common with what we believed than with what separated us.

When I heard the young man with the bat tell his story of being the victim of violence, I felt the obligation to respond, to work for a community (and a world) where our children can grow in safety.

Creating Safe Places

Dave Kelly, C.P.P.S.



I recently was called to help out with a school community that was suffering from the trauma of losing one of their students who was shot and killed near the school. On top of that violence, which shook the entire community, one of their teachers had died unexpectedly. They had already held a memorial service for both the young man and the teacher, but there seemed to be more that was needed.

They called us, knowing that we worked with those who suffered from violence. Using the restorative practice of a peacemaking circle, we created a safe place where the faculty (we also did a similar circle with the youth) could come together and talk about the violence and loss. They shared their pain and their hopes for their school. After the circle many told me that it was the first time that they had really come together for something other than teaching. They went on to say how much they learned about their fellow teachers and staff.

Violence is bound to happen. But perhaps as some violence seems inevitable, what also needs to be inevitable is that we come together and respond to the harm done. Too often we think there is nothing we can do. The simple act of coming together in a safe environment and sharing from our hearts can start the healing we so desperately need.

Fr. Dave Kelly is on the staff of the PBMR and also serves in prison ministry in Chicago.

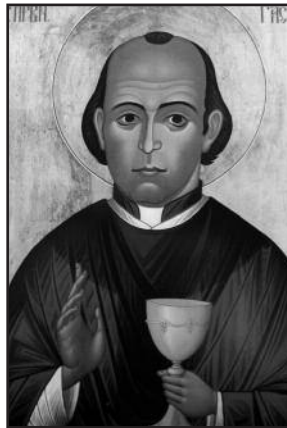
PRAYER FOR THE 2010 CONVOCATION

Eternal God,
we offer you the Precious Blood of Jesus,
for our sisters and brothers
who gather for our Precious Blood Convocation.
Accept us as disciples of your son, Jesus.
Deepen our understanding
of the theology of the cross and resurrection,
which shapes us as your children and brings us life.
Move us to witness to our faith
in the Precious Blood of Jesus,
by actions which lift up reconciliation,
center on the poor and displaced of our world,
provide for the immigrant,
counsel the sorrowful
and bring your Church the unity and courage it needs
to live in our world today.
Help us to embrace
the anguish of our world and our Church
with the redeeming love of Christ,
which conquers all things, even despair and death.
Let us join with our ancestors,
with Maria De Mattias,
Gaspar del Bufalo,
Maria Anna Brunner,
Theresa Weber
and Francis Pfanner,
in proclaiming the Precious Blood of Jesus
to a world in need of redemption.
Our communities are places of friendship and support,
of prayer and study, of action and witness.
Send your grace to all our Precious Blood congregations.
May the Holy Spirit rouse us to be your witnesses,
set our direction, lighten our burdens,
refresh us with your presence,
and empower us to proclaim your Kingdom.
Bless our Convocation with joy and energy,
with purpose and wisdom,
and with hope and promise.
May it be a moment of grace for our Church
and our congregations.
We can be your disciples today.
We must proclaim the Precious Blood to our neighbors.
We will sacrifice our lives for the sake of your Kingdom.
Amen.

ST. GASPAR TO BE ON TV

St. Gaspar del Bufalo, founder of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, will be featured on *Super Saints*, a regularly scheduled program on the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN). The episode about St. Gaspar will premiere in May on the following dates:

- Wednesday, May 20 at 9:00 P.M.
- Thursday, May 21 at 10:30 A.M.
- Saturday, May 23 at 6:00 A.M.



The episode will then be inserted into the regular rotation for the show, according to the show's producers and hosts, Bob and Penny Lord, and will also be aired again during the week of St. Gaspar's feast day, October 21.

A DVD of the 30-minute episode is already available from the Lord's website, www.bobandpennylord.com (or call 800.633.2484) for \$19.95 plus shipping. They have also produced a booklet on the life of St. Gaspar that is available for \$5 plus shipping.



Fr. David Matz with Companions Rose Pacheco (l) and Connie Swymeler

PRECIOUS BLOOD MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

David Matz, C.P.P.S.

"Often, we may expect to hear 'the cry of the blood' coming from the poor in third world countries, or from nations with oppressive rulers. We may expect to hear 'the cry of the blood' coming from an obvious violation of human rights, or headlines in the media. Sometimes we miss 'the cry of the blood' coming from within our own families and communities. It is tempting to avoid topics that are controversial and uncomfortable, either rationalizing or forgetting that these topics deserve our thought and attention. Homosexuality is one such topic, yet it is a very common reality affecting very real people within our families and communities."

These words offered to us by a Companion of the Precious Blood cite one of the realities that face our brothers and sisters who live our Precious Blood Spirituality. The Precious Blood Committee of Justice for Persons who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered recently met in order to conclude preparations for our up-coming workshops: "Assuring a Place At the Table."

We felt the need to clarify for our Precious Blood communities that this workshop is meant to be inclusive of all our members, associates and companions who are from Precious Blood Communities that make up the Precious Blood Leadership Conference, as well as our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered brothers and sisters—and their families—with whom we minister.

Remember, if only 1 percent of the earth's 1 billion Catholics are dealing with this reality in some way—and many with great fear—that would be 10 million Catholics. Our guess is that more than 1 percent of Catholics are affected by this reality. As Precious Blood people we are called to be aware and informed about the cries of our brothers and sisters so that we can proclaim God's love through the Blood of Christ.

Fr. David Matz is part of the community at Sonmino Mission House in Berkeley. In addition to his work with the Precious Blood Ministry of Justice, he also ministers to a local Spanish speaking congregation.

A PLACE AT THE TABLE

Sponsored by the Precious Blood
Ministry of Justice

Dayton, OH—June 11-12/12-13
Leavenworth, KS—August 20-21/21-22

The Precious Blood Ministry of Justice for Persons who are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Transgendered (a collaboration of associates and members of the communities involved in the Precious Blood Leadership Conference) is sponsoring an overnight workshop in order to dialogue and engage LGBT issues and Precious Blood Spirituality.

The title of the workshop is: “Assuring a Place at the Table.” As baptized Catholics, we all have a place at the table of Christ. However, in recent times religious and secular groups have challenged this presumption, and often exclude many of our brothers and sisters from our communities (or many LGBT Catholics have chosen to leave) thus diminishing the wholeness of the Body of Christ. Our common Precious Blood spirituality calls us to respond.

Because our ministry is one of advocacy, we wish to create a safe place for all in the Precious Blood family to gather and share our stories and experiences, personal and communal, in order to respond to these issues in light of our Precious Blood Spirituality.

There are two workshops scheduled in both the east and the west regions with the hopes of accommodating both lay persons and religious within our Precious Blood Family:

June 11–12 & 12–13 in Dayton, OH
August 20–21 & 21–22 in Leavenworth, KS

Each workshop will begin at 7:00 P.M. and conclude at 4:00 P.M. the following day. Arrival is between 5–7 P.M., with some food provided.

A registration form is available for download at the Precious Blood Ministry of Justice website: www.allbloodisprecious.com.

CIRCLE TRAINING WORKSHOP

Sponsored by the Precious Blood
Ministry of Reconciliation

Savior Pastoral Center
Kansas City, KS—June 8–11, 2009

The Circle is an ancient method used in many cultures for sharing and telling the truth in a safe, respectful setting. Circles provide a process for bringing people together as equals to talk about difficult issues and painful experiences in an atmosphere of respect and concern for everyone. Circles create a sacred space in which all people can connect to each other as equals and recognize their mutual interdependence in the struggle to live in right relationship with each other.

Circles are useful when two or more people:

- Need to make decisions together
 - Have a disagreement
- Want to work together as a team
 - Wish to celebrate
 - Wish to share difficulties
- Want to learn from each other

The Circle method is a valuable tool for those who lead groups. It is particularly helpful in groups which are polarized or divided. It is an effective method for peacemaking and is a practice of restorative justice.

When? The Kansas City Province is sponsoring a Circle Training Workshop from Monday, June 8 through Thursday, June 11, 2009. It will be held at Savior Pastoral Center, 12601 Parallel Parkway, Kansas City, KS 66109.

Registration will be from 4:00–5:00 P.M. on Monday and the workshop will conclude on Thursday afternoon.

Cost. Includes private room with bath, all meals and all materials, \$150. Because of the nature of the training, it is required that attendees participate fully by attending all meals and sessions.

Registration. Pre-registration is required. Registration forms may be requested from Marie Trout at 816.781.4344 or downloaded from the province website at www.kcprovince.org. Please send the registration form to Marie Trout (2130 Saint Gaspar Way, Liberty, MO 64068 or email companionskc@yahoo.com) no later than May 18. Registration is limited to 20 participants.

Workshop facilitators are David Kelly, C.P.P.S. and Bill Nordenbrock, C.P.P.S., staff members of the Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation in Chicago. You may contact them for further information at 773.579.0781 or go to the PBMR website at www.pbmr.org.

MY BACK PAGES

Richard Bayuk, C.P.P.S.

As I have lived with this issue for some days now, reading, editing, choosing, reflecting, I keep coming back to an experience that approaches the universal. How often have you found yourself contemplating a purchase in the store, and as you read the fine print on the box, suddenly there are those words that can strike fear into the bravest heart—or at least cause one to reconsider the purchase. *Some assembly required.*

“Some” is a relative term in these situations. But assembly is required nonetheless. And it is true for our families, our parishes, our communities, our nation. It is true for us in the Kansas City Province. We assembled several weeks ago, and you can read about it in these pages.

Without careful assembly, that box of wooden parts from IKEA intended to be a beautiful desk, will instead be a bunch of parts that don't fit together—or end up broken. The circle will be unbroken for us—as community or family or parish—but only if we are committed to assembly, to coming together, sharing deeply, and renewing the bonds that build us into that “finished product” (which is, of course, never finished).

This issue speaks to connections and the life we share with others, including and perhaps especially those who did the assembling before us and for us. I offer in conclusion two poems that speak to me of these connections and the need for assembly.

Finding a Long Gray Hair

Jane Kenyon

I scrub the long floorboards
in the kitchen, repeating
the motions of other women
who have lived in this house.
And when I find a long gray hair
floating in the pail,
I feel my life added to theirs.

Scars

William Stafford

They tell how it was, and how time
came along, and how it happened
again and again. They tell
the slant life takes when it turns
and slashes your face as a friend.
Any wound is real. In church
a woman lets the sun find
her cheek, and we see the lesson:
there are years in that book; there are sorrows
a choir can't reach when they sing.
Rows of children lift their faces of promise,
places where the scars will be.

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